

Book Review

Disaster Planning for the Clinical Practice

by Neil Baum, MD and John W. McDaniel, MHA
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Disasters can happen. Those of us living in the Gulf South are reminded of the potential for natural disasters with the onset of hurricane season each June. The events of 9/11 serve as a constant reminder to all of us of the troubled society we currently live in. As physicians, do we just accept the risks or should we acquire knowledge and take action to prepare as best as possible for future disasters?

Disaster Planning for the Clinical Practice hopes to assist in the latter option. The authors are Dr Neil Baum, a urologist in New Orleans who was displaced after Hurricane Katrina, and John W. McDaniel, MHA, president and chief executive officer of Peak Performance Physicians, LLC, also from New Orleans. This book was written as a result of their Katrina experiences: to increase others' awareness of potential disasters and of the planning necessary to mitigate further losses in a medical practice, regardless of the geographic location.

The easy-to-read manual outlines the steps that a physician's clinical practice should take to plan and prepare for natural and man-made disasters. An enclosed CD-ROM provides forms and materials for the medical practice that can be downloaded and used for planning, before and after a disaster, and during the recovery phase.

The first of the 10 chapters reviews the different types of disasters that can affect a physician's practice—from the types of practices to the disaster types associated with particular geographic locations (eg, earthquake or hurricane). The second chapter outlines the hazards associated with technologic disasters and the steps necessary to prevent computer disasters. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 encompass the logistic steps needed to create and implement a disaster plan and to protect and recover the clinical practice once the disaster has waned. The electronic protection of patient records and of other electronic information needed to reopen a practice is covered in Chapter 6. Chapters 7 through 10 discuss the physician-hospital relationship and synergy in disaster planning; insurance coverage; establishment of alternative sites of practice; and formulation of a personal disaster plan for employees.

This text includes built-in redundancies that allow for quick reference to the areas of interest. The 19 appendices and accompanying CD-ROM make disaster planning and postdisaster recovery much simpler. The CD has detailed forms, charts, and questionnaires that are easily available for downloading and implementation. I would recommend this publication to physicians in solo or small-office practices who wish to ready their practices for unanticipated disasters.

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